

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 25, 2005

Senator Robert Bennett,
Chairman
Senate Agriculture
Appropriations Committee
SD- 188
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Herb Kohl, Ranking
Member
Senate Agriculture
Appropriations Committee
SH-188
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Henry Bonilla,
Chairman
House Agriculture
Appropriations Committee
2362A Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Rosa DeLauro,
Ranking Member
House Agriculture
Appropriations Committee
2362A Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As the FY 2006 agriculture appropriations bill conference committee nears completion, we write as long-time supporters of mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL), in strong support of assuring that the law is implemented as scheduled on September 30, 2006. We therefore urge that the House of Representatives' provision delaying implementation for beef and beef products under COOL law be deleted.

COOL remains a top priority for both producers and consumers across the country. Producers have waited four years to promote their products as, "Made in the U.S.A.," since the original COOL law was included in the 2002 farm bill. We believe further delay is unwarranted and unnecessary. A recent consumer survey reiterated overwhelming support for mandatory COOL, with 85 percent of respondents supporting a requirement of labeling meat, seafood and produce.

Twenty months ago, USDA stated a one to five percent shift in consumer preference would be more than enough to pay the entire cost of the program. Congress must work with USDA officials in reviewing the numerous consumer surveys and polls conducted regarding mandatory COOL and develop guidelines that are workable for producers, processors and retailers. Tying the hands of USDA by delaying funds for implementation is not a viable solution.

COOL should be implemented for the remaining covered commodities included in the 2002 farm bill. Using the appropriations process to delay the implementation of this important legislation sends the wrong message to consumers and producers who remain in strong support of the law. Again, we urge you to strike the House provision which would delay implementation for COOL on beef and beef products.

Sincerely,

Chuck Grassley

John Thune

Steve Johnson

Ken Salazar

Michael B. Enzi

[Signature]

Craig Thomas

Hunt Lund

Max Baucus